

The Republican.

No. 25, VOL. 9.] LONDON, Friday, June 18, 1824. [PRICE 6d.

TRIAL OF WILLIAM CAMPION,

For the publication of the "Age of Reason," at the New Court Old Bailey, before Newman Knowles, the Recorder, and a Common Jury, Tuesday, June 8.

THIS morning being appointed for the trial of Mr. Carlile's shopmen, at an early hour the Court, and the avenues leading to it, were crowded by persons, who were anxious to witness the trials of so many persons, nine in number, and all young men, who, for the sake of their opinions, were ready to sacrifice their liberty. A host of Barristers, with Mr. Maule, the Solicitor to the Treasury, appeared to prosecute the defendants.

At nine o'clock the Recorder entered the Court, and the defendants were all placed at the bar. A London Jury was then sworn. While the Clerk of the Arraignment called over their names, one of the defendants (who had a list in his hand), as each name was called, nodded a kind of assent; and took no objection to the following persons, who were sworn on the Jury:—

John Hornby, William Hopkins, J. David Price, J. Muckle, William Sharpe, Joshua Smith, Samuel Skinner, Thomas B. Percival, John Lane, E. Witham, John Draysey, H. Vollum.

William Campion was then placed at the bar, charged with publishing a blasphemous libel contained in Paine's Age of Reason. The prisoner pleaded Not Guilty.

Mr. Barnard opened the pleadings; he said that the prisoner stood indicted for unlawfully and maliciously publishing a most wicked and blasphemous libel of and concerning the Christian religion, and of and concerning the Holy Bible, intending to vilify and bring the same into ridicule and contempt.

Mr. Bolland said, that by the opening of his learned friend, the Jury were informed that the indictment against the defendant was for publishing a blasphemous libel. He should consider it an insult to their understandings, and a waste of the time of the Court, if he were to dilate upon a subject which had now become so trite. He, however, would remark, that men of their age and understanding must be aware of the necessity of suppressing an evil so

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pregnant with mischief to the present, and to the rising generation, destroying those props upon which we obtained support and consolation in this world, and hopes of happiness hereafter. For some time, the Jury could not be ignorant, there had been a struggle, and a constant war, between the Government of this country and persons who have attempted to deluge the nation with blasphemous libels, and the Attorney-General had thought proper not to file criminal informations against the parties, but to have the offenders indicted summarily at the Quarter Sessions. The defendants had been so indicted by order of the Attorney-General, whose humble representative he (Mr. Bolland) then was. The learned Counsel then called the attention of the Jury to the libels published by the defendant, which he would read to them, commenting thereon as he proceeded, and he would put it to them, whether the language was not horrible in the extreme.—The first count charged the defendant with publishing a scandalous, wicked, impious, and blasphemous libel as follows:—"Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel torturous executions, and the unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that it be called the word of a Demon, than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind," to the great displeasure of Almighty God; to the great scandal and infamy of that part of the Holy Bible called the Old Testament, &c. This (said the learned Counsel) is the impious language used in this vile work, than which nothing could be more blasphemous.

The second count charged the defendant with publishing a scandalous and blasphemous libel in these words: "Did the book, called the Bible, excel in purity of ideas and expression all the books that are now extant in the world, I would not take it for my rule of faith, as being the word of God, because the possibility would nevertheless exist of my being imposed upon. But when I see, throughout the greatest part of this book, scarcely any thing but a history of the grossest vices, and a collection of the most paltry and contemptible tales, I cannot dishonour my Creator by calling it by his name."

Such language as this required no comment, and he should proceed to read the next count, as it was only to repeat the language, to excite their abhorrence of it.

The third count of the indictment charged the defendant with publishing the libel following: "I have now gone through the examination of the four books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and when it is considered that the whole space of time from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension is but a few days, and that all the circumstances are said to have happened nearly about the same spot, Jerusalem; it is, I believe, impossible to find in

any story upon record, so many, and such glaring absurdities, contradictions, and falsehoods, as are in these books."

The next count, said the learned Counsel, was very short, but it was a wicked libel, and the only object in publishing so blasphemous an expression, was to effect the downfall of our holy religion, by undermining the principles of those whose consolation and hopes of salvation rested entirely on the divine word of God. The sentence was this: "It (the Testament) is a book of lies, wickedness, and blasphemy." According to this, the defendant, admitted there was such a thing as blasphemy, how *he* defined it, he (the Counsel) could not pretend to say.

The fifth count charged the defendant with publishing the following libel:—"As it is nothing extraordinary that a woman should have been with-child before she was married, and that the son she might bring forth should be executed unjustly, I see no reason for supposing that such a woman as Mary, and such men as Joseph and Jesus, did not exist; their mere existence is a matter of indifference, about which there is no ground either to believe or disbelieve, and which comes under the common head of—it may be so—and what then? The probability is, however, that there were such persons, or at least, such as resembled them, in part of the circumstances, because almost all romantic stories have been suggested by some actual circumstance, as the fabulous story of Robinson Crusoe was suggested by the case of Alexander Selkirk."

The learned Counsel designated the next count as most horrible, and shocking to the ears of every person except such creatures as the defendants. It stated, "that the Holy Bible teaches us to believe that the almighty committed debauchery with a woman engaged to be married, and the belief of this debauchery is called, 'Faith!'"

The learned Counsel concluded by stating, that he felt great sorrow at seeing so many young men placed at that bar, charged with offences so heinous against God and their country; but he was convinced, if they lived to his age, they would become convinced of the divine truths of that religion which they now blasphemed.

Defendant—It will not be by such treatment as we have received.

Should distress or sickness overtake them, they would find that religion their comfort—their stay, and the best support they could rely upon. In prosecuting these libellers, it was no war of the Government against toleration, it permits any mode of worship, it allows any one to entertain what religious opinions he may think proper;

Defendant—My standing here is a proof against your toleration.

But the Government of the law of the land will not permit, and he (the Counsel) trusted that they never would permit, persons of this description to propagate doctrines, and promulgate opinions,

that may bring others into as deplorable a state as these wretched men now before the Court. Without further observation, his learned friend would proceed to prove the publication.

Thomas Drummond sworn, examined by Mr. Barnard: I am a messenger of Bow-street; I know No. 84, Fleet-street, Carlile's name is over the door. On the fifth of May, I went to that shop, and saw the prisoner at the bar there; I went into the shop, and asked the prisoner for the book called Paine's Age of reason; he was standing at the counter, turned round and took this book, which I now produce, from a pile of books; I paid him four shillings for it, and afterwards marked it before I parted with it. I asked him if I purchased half a dozen of them if he would sell them at a less price? He said he would take off twenty-five per cent, if I purchased a dozen copies.

Recorder—Prisoner, you may examine the witness now if you think proper.

Defendant—He may go away; I want nothing with him.

The Clerk of the Arraignment then read from the book those parts which had been laid out in the indictment as libellous, and the defendant compared it with the indictment itself that he might take advantage of any inaccuracy.

The Recorder here intimated that a person named Henry Baldwin Raven, who went before the Grand Jury to point out the libellous passages to them, was a witness whose name was affixed to the back of the bill, and if the prisoner thought proper he might examine him.

The prisoner said he should not examine him.

The Recorder called upon the prisoner for his defence.

DEFENCE.

Gentlemen of the Jury.—An unreflecting mind might consider it an impudent presumption, that not only the sale, but the defence of such writings as are now before you, should be persisted in; but I commence my defence with a declaration, that on this head, I am free from all impudence, and even unbecoming presumption, that I am morally and solemnly impressed with the importance of what I have done and am now doing in this case, and that no man ever acted under a sense of an higher, more imperative, and more honourable duty than the person now addressing you, in the purpose of that address. I hold to sentiments consonant with the general sentiment of the writings now impugned, and because, that I am open enough to avow this fact, I claim the consideration from you, that I have not been actuated by any bad motive. I purpose to unfold my sense of the illegality of these prosecutions, and hope to make you share my immutable conviction, that no illegal act of mine, has brought me to answer before a Jury of my fellow citizens.

If it be said, as it has been said, that we have had warning

enough to avoid the sale of publications which displease persons in power, I answer, first, that persons in power have no legal power to suppress such publications, which are filled with matters of free and fair enquiry, and that, they are not better, if so good, judges of proper and improper books, as persons out of power: they cannot be so impartial: second, that no books, particularly such deep contemplative and philosophical works as those for which I am prosecuted, can lead to breaches of the peace, or to any kind of violation of the existing laws; they are pure matters of argument and reasoning; and though a general knowledge of their contents may lead to certain legislative changes, yet of all things, they are the least calculated to set a reader to defy existing laws. They are not book readers who systematically violate the laws of the country.

Again, the warning which I have received in this case, has been a warning that I might safely proceed in the sale of these books. Into the shop, from which I was arrested on the seventh of May, I entered early in September last. Throughout the intervening time, I openly exposed and sold Paine's Age of Reason, (with all other publications), as commonly and as freely as tobacco or snuff is sold in any shop in London. I heard, that the Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench should say, in October, that no further prosecutions of these books would take place, as there was nothing injurious to be feared from them. This was addressed from the Bench to a Jury in a case of trial for publishing Palmer's Principles of Nature. Joseph William Trust, the person then tried, was allowed, in the last Hilary Term, to go at large without sentence, and no person in my situation could have felt, under such circumstances, that there was impropriety in doing what I have done. If previous prosecutions be argued as a warning, I answer, that, upon such a principle we are not to this day free from the danger of a burning for witchcraft or heresy. We may be again imprisoned to suffocation, as conventiclers or non-conformists; or be dragooned, shot, hung, and burnt, in houses and barns full, as the Scotch Covenanters were by the Church of England, down to the time of the union. Upon such a plea as this, there never can be any safety for any person, if some antiquated being gets into power, and impiously craves to reverse the order of nature, by making every thing retrograde to that point which pleases his fancy. No, Gentlemen, we must go onward, it is a matter in which no retrogression can take place, punish whom you will; and the man who desires it is an unworthy member of any community of human beings. The character of my publication, for I boast of the act of publishing, is that it points the human mind onward; and this progressive enlightenment, to the owls in literature, is as offensive as the light of the sun to the bird of night. All their gratifications arise from darkness, corruptions, and abuses; and they screech like that hideous bird, and fly upon you the moment you throw a ray of light upon them.

Light is to them like carbon to insects: they lose their leech-like hold in the good things of that species of life which may be termed human vegetation; and perish from the contact. They are not intellectual beings, to be improved by increasing knowledge.

Gentlemen, I shall study to avoid all matters that are not strictly connected with this charge; and shall enter upon no discussions, but such as I consider to be important to my defence. I desire not to irritate; but to conciliate:—not to confuse by a multitude of words; but to explain the subject, and to place it before you in the most convincing light. Were I not sure, that in my publication, I have been the advocate of nothing but truth, and the public good; were I not sure, that my conduct has not been any breach of law; were I not sure, that my motives have been wholly good in doing what I have done in this case, I would not dare to occupy your time, in listening to a multitude of words, which could not benefit you nor me: but I do hope, that I shall be able to convince you, and the whole public, that what I have done is perfectly moral and perfectly legal.

Gentlemen, it was believed, in consequence of the declaration from the Chief Justice, that the publication of metaphysical opinions would no longer, in this country, be subjected to prosecution. I now find however to my cost, that the hopes of myself and friends were without foundation, and that the rancorous spirit which animated our enemies, is about to add new victims to those already sacrificed upon the altar of prejudice. We flattered ourselves that it had already been sufficiently demonstrated, how incapable mere physical power is to overcome the intellectual energies of logical demonstration. We supposed that the combinations that exist only to dumfound reason, and to prevent the growth of liberal ideas, would have been convinced that there also exists in this country a set of men, who are determined as far as in them lies, to maintain free discussion, and to repel with the enthusiasm of public spirit, every attempt towards annihilating the imprescriptible right of publishing and selling openly what we believe to be productive of public good. Yes, for reasons best known to themselves, these powers have started again into activity; and after remaining dormant a whole winter, have, like vipers regenerated by the warmth, again commenced their venomous attacks against the unfortunate objects of their hatred. Gentlemen, I am brought here as a criminal to this bar; and if your verdict is unfavourable to me, I may have to endure many months, nay, even years of imprisonment. But what have I done to merit this? Have I injured any honest man? or you Gentlemen of the Jury? I have injured no man, and yet I am treated as a criminal. I had imagined that the law, that is, the will of the people, could only punish what was injurious to the people. But perhaps some one may reply, that by selling the works of Paine, I have in-

jured the people, inasmuch as I have attempted to deprive them of their established religion. Now, I should wish to know, my Lord, whether, if you were a Judge in Thibet, China, or any other idolatrous country, you would quietly sit there and condemn a Christian Missionary to fine or imprisonment for endeavouring to deprive the Thibetians or Chinese of their established religion?

(The defendant here stopped as if waiting to receive an answer from the Bench—but he got none. He continued.) The case you will say is different. The worship of Christ is the true religion; the worship of the Dalui Lama, or of Tien, is a false religion. Alas! Gentlemen, how difficult it is to discover truth from falsity, when religion is concerned! At the utmost boundaries of the East the disciples of Confucius preach a faith, that can scarcely be distinguished from pure Theism. If I journey westward, I come to a vast country, where the greatest nobles are glad to eat the foces of their God. Further on, I meet with Mahomedans and find it difficult to decide between the heretical Shü, and the orthodox Sonni. Penetrating into Europe, I discover a fourth religion consisting of the worship of Christ; and in my search after truth, I am surprised and grieved to find, that these learned religionists are divided into a thousand sects, each inveighing against its nine hundred and ninety nine opponents, and vainly proclaiming that the truth belongs to themselves alone. In this conflict of opinions, it were rash, it were presumptuous, to decide. I learn therefore to suspend my judgment; to look with calmness upon the angry disputants; to investigate how far each party may have participated in the enjoyment of intellectual superiority; and to cull from every sect (what appears more or less common to them all) the religion of nature.

Gentlemen, I do not say that, *I am right*; but only, that *I believe* that I am right—and in consequence of this belief, I have endeavoured to the best of my power to propagate the sale of those books which appeared to me to be the most likely to promote free enquiry. It has been again and again urged, that there is nothing indecent or immoral in Paine. It is written in a style of the most serious and philosophical argument, it raises not a blush on the cheek of the maiden, nor tempts the youth by the lascivious descriptions of fascinating poetry. All is here plain and evident. The author was a man of strict morality, mature age, sound intellect, and unimpeachable goodness. He has spoken the words of truth in the language of simplicity; and careless of worldly honour, and the praise of his cotemporaries, he was satisfied with the applause of his conscience and with the hope that his writings would not be condemned at the tribunal of posterity. But the age of darkness still continues; prejudice still breathes forth its malediction upon free enquiry; and even in the most civilized countries the voice of truth is still rarely heard, for she hardly dares to speak except in whispers. It is the duty therefore of every real

patriot, of every well wisher to the liberty of mankind, to step forward, and spreading the works of the greatest philosophers, to hasten the day spring of reason, and to dissipate the shades of error. And for this shall we be prosecuted? For this shall we be imprisoned? I repeat, that I had thought the inutility of such prosecutions had already been sufficiently proved.

Gentlemen, when Christianity was feeble and young it was humble and abject; now, that is exalted in the pride of its strength, it disdains that tolerance, without which it never could have subsisted. The early fathers of the church deprecated the occasional attempts of the powerful, to crush their rising superstition; and maintained that brutal force was no proof of mental superiority. Arnobius, in his treatise against the Pagans, or against those professing what was in his time the established religion of the state, very properly said: "Prove such a one to be in error; for as to seizing upon books, and wishing to prohibit the reading of what has been published, this is not the defence of God, but the fear of the testimony of truth." Indeed, Gentlemen, those modern hypocrites, who take upon themselves the defence of God, seem to me not only the opponents of Truth, but the utterers of blasphemy. Does the omnipotent Lord of the universe stand in need of man to assist him? Can he that formed the world, the sun, and planets, and all the systems that blaze around us, can *he* stand in need of the insects that crawl upon this portion of the globe, for fear some other insect should insult him? Surely such men as my prosecutors, must have some degrading ideas of their Jehovah, and must imagine he is as impotent as themselves, and that he is a mere human being, fearful of his ill-gotten wealth, and careful lest any assertion of freedom should venture to open the eyes of our plundered fellow citizens.

The time was, though I grant that time was but of short duration, when the Christians, desirous of destroying the established faith, courted enquiry, and solicited investigation. They appealed to the exorcised Damons, and to the prophecies of David and of the Sybil. They laughed at the absurdities of the received doctrines; Jupiter converted into a bull, and Mars committing adultery with Venus. But now a days if I were to hint of the Holy Ghost's descending like a dove, (a shape which Tertulliauns, very learnedly defends); or, if I were to reprobate the improbable intercourse between the omnipotent Lord of the creation and the wife of a carpenter in Galilee, you would perhaps subject me to punishment, which the early Christians very rarely met with. Origenes indeed confesses, that the number of martyrs were very limited.

I ask each of you, Gentlemen, if you were brought before a Turkish Codhi for selling Bibles, would you not think the intolerance of your enemies, at least, blameable? Now, I am willing to grant that such a case is never likely to happen; because the

Turks (at any rate till lately) not only tolerated certain Christians, but even permitted the Patriarch of the Greek church to live in splendour at their capitol.

But at any rate, I am free to maintain, that the books for the sale of which I am prosecuted, are far more moral than the Bible. You can find nothing in the works of Paine that can raise a blush on the cheek of women or children. No obscene tales to pollute the ears of innocence, which is more than can be said for that, upon which mine is but a candid criticism. The Jews very properly forbade their children the perusal of Ezekiel and the songs of Solomon, until they had obtained the mature age of thirty years. Why then do the modern adorers of Jehovah, put such books into the hands of their children, before they can possibly distinguish between the obscene, though literal interpretation, and that which is more moral though at the same time less intelligible? If we uphold our voices against such publications, we surely deserve the praise and not the blame of our fellow citizens. The Government should unite with us in decrying what cannot improve morality, and what many well meaning Christians must allow to be capable of investing impure ideas under the holy garb of religion. Yet we are told that these and all other books in the Christian scriptures were inspired by the Deity; that the great unknown cause of all things absolutely dictated, what some of the most depraved human beings would be ashamed of; and that if we do not believe in them, we shall be roasted alive for an infinite period in a place, which neither geologist, geographer or astronomer, has ever yet been able to point out. Gentlemen, we cannot believe what we are persuaded is impossible; and we have too great a reverence for the supreme power, to suppose him capable of that which would disgrace his creatures.

We have our religion, or system of morality, and you have yours. I seek not to persecute you for writing in defence of your faith, why then do you prosecute *me* for writing in defence of my faith? I adore a great unknown cause, and thank him for the blessings he has given me. But I cannot believe this eternal, immutable, incomparable deity can have a son as old as himself, who was whipped and killed to appease the wrath of his father. Could I find any human father guilty of such unnatural cruelty, I would denounce him to the laws of his country, as a villain; and shall I attribute such villainy, to a being who is the source of justice, and the fountain of kindheartedness? On my honour, I cannot conceive how men endowed with common sense, can for an instant credit such absurdities; the most devout Christian, notwithstanding the prejudices of his childhood, must feel some internal doubts, as to the probability, not to say the possibility, of his being in error, on some of the most important articles of his creed.

I am myself firmly persuaded, and I believe most liberal mind-

ed persons are so too, that no state can be well governed, unless the people have decreed the equality of all religions. My religion has as much right to the protection of a free Government as another man's hath. In Hindostan, the English tolerate the worship of the Indian Trinity, Brama, Vishnou, and Shiven. Here they uphold another Trinity, that of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In the South Sea Islands, I am told there is a third sort of Trinity; and if the Platoniceans still existed, we should have a thousand other Trinities. We are willing to suffer all these Trinities to exist in peace, if they do not meddle with us; but when we are tithed, taxed, fined, and imprisoned for these Trinities, we cannot but regard them as pernicious to the public welfare.

I cannot but consider that the English Government practises a very strange system with regard to religion. At the Cape of Good Hope the Bosjesmen are allowed to be Atheists, as they are considered too stupid to be capable of becoming Christians. We are willing to be considered as stupid as the Bosjesmen, rather than be prosecuted for what we confess we do not comprehend. But recollect, Gentlemen, if you were before the inquisition, you would be exposed to still greater dangers than I am before this court, even if you were accused of the veriest shadow of a theological error. In Ireland, though seven-eighths of the population are undoubtedly Catholics, the Catholics are subjected to the greatest deprivations: while in lower Canada, a conquered country, the Catholics are countenanced, encouraged, and supported. Let our fundamental principle be, to do as we would be done by; and not act towards others in a manner that would be disagreeable to ourselves. Jesus Christ, is said to have considered this such good morality, that he adopted it as part of his code; and it were to be wished, Gentlemen of the Jury, that Christians would not only repeat this law, but obey it.

You may think that I am not to be treated as a believer in Christianity; but Justin, who, like myself, was a martyr for there-ligion which contrary to law he professed and promulgated, has expressly said, that "every good man is a Christian;" now there is no one here who endeavours to impeach my honesty; and therefore I claim fellowship with the Christians, and I exhort them not to condemn a man who is only desirous of promoting universal happiness. I wish I could reverse the sentiment of St. Justin, and affirm, that "every Christian is a good man;" but alas! we find it too true, that morality and Christianity are by no means synonymous, and that faith and hope do not always conduct even the most firm believers to that greatest of virtues, charity.

Gentlemen, you would consider yourselves ill used, if you were obliged to pay tythes to the Catholics, and if they prevented you from publishing your opinions upon religion as often as you

pleased. Yet, why have you a greater right than they? Or how is your religion superior to mine? Yours is founded upon miracles, and mine upon reason. If miracles are from God, is not reason also from God? We have no Bible but the book of nature; no hell but our own conscience. I could easily show you the superiority of our creed, and how much it surpasses in dignified simplicity, the complicated doctrines of the Indians, the Jews and Christians. But the subject has been repeatedly discussed; and I have too much respect for the valuable time of those who are charged with the administration of justice, to delay them with useless repetitions of hackneyed arguments. But you must allow at the same time how much I have at stake. Who amongst you would wish in the prime of life, to be incarcerated amongst a set of men, confined for almost every description of crime, for months, perhaps years? I do not speak of loss of money, I have none to lose; and it is only by enduring additional imprisonment that I can hope to atone for the unpardonable crime of poverty. But a long and strict incarceration is of itself a sufficient misfortune; I might perhaps be disposed to wish, that those who speedily condemn a fellow citizen to be immured in a dungeon, were themselves obliged, for a few days, to suffer the same punishment.

Gentlemen of the Jury, you are little aware of what has to be endured in a prison. My aching bones will make me long remember my last night's lodging. I had nothing but a door mat to lie upon, and a block for my pillow; added to which, I had the pleasure of being crawled over by those delicate little creatures called black beetles.

If it can be said I have injured any men, it is the priests. Let then the priests stand forward; and let them say boldly: "thou hast wished to deprive us of our tythes; and therefore we wish to imprison thee." Such conduct would be bold and manly; but instead of that it is hypocritically said, "that I have sold certain books to the high displeasure of Almighty God, and our Sovereign Lord the King." Now, in reply, I beg leave to observe, that if I have offended God, to God alone am I answerable: shall man take upon himself to avenge his Deity? or is Jehovah so impotent that he cannot be his own avenger?—"Vengeance is mine," saith Jehovah. Let it be so. Then I say to you, oh men avaunt! God may plead his own cause with me, as heretofore he pleaded it with Job: or if God defereth my punishment, and if he be not desirous of revenge until I am, to all appearance, annihilated, it is surely enough that I should be burnt alive for ever and ever in another world, without being incarcerated in this.

If it is said I have spoken irreverently of the Deity, I indignant-ly repel the charge. The most sublime and animating descriptions of the Deity are to be found in the works of Paine, and such as I have never seen excelled in any Christian author. The sole object of the man, and of all Deists, has been to remove those

degrading attributes which level him to the human being. Had not all systems of religion rendered the Deity subservient to their own interest, such men as Paine never would have written; and instead of my being prosecuted for publishing his works, I ought to be supported for standing forth with a solitary band to proclaim the power and goodness of the creator. I will read you a few passages from his works, that you may be the better acquainted with the feelings and disposition of the author. I shall show you by these extracts, that he has venerated all that was good; and is most strictly deserving the approbation of mankind. A very few passages will be necessary for my present purpose.

I commence with his creed, which may be found in the first page:—

“I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

“I believe the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our fellow creatures happy.”

Page 21. “It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of a *word of God* can unite. The Creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

“Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance, even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the Scripture called the Creation.”

Page 24. “As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of Atheism—a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of Manism with but little Deism, and is as near to Atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker an opaque body, which it calls a Redeemer, as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun, and it produces by this means a religious or an irreligious.

eclipse of light. It has put the whole orbit of reason into shade."

Page 42. "The God in whom we believe is a God of moral truth, and not a God of mystery or obscurity. Mystery is the antagonist of truth. It is a fog of human invention, that obscures truth, and represents it in distortion. Truth never envelopes *itself* in mystery; and the mystery in which it is at any time enveloped is the work of its antagonist, and never of itself.

"Religion, therefore, being the belief of a God, and the practice of moral truth, cannot have connection with mystery. The belief of a God, so far from having any thing of mystery in it, is of all beliefs the most easy, because it arises to us, as is before observed, out of necessity. And the practices of moral truth, or in other words, a practical imitation of the moral goodness of God, is no other than our acting towards each other as he acts benignly towards all. We cannot *serve* God in the manner we serve those who cannot do without such service; and therefore the only idea we can have of serving God, is that of contributing to the happiness of the living creation that God has made. This cannot be done by retiring ourselves from the society of the world, and spending a recluse life in selfish devotion."

Page 88. "The only religion that has not been invented, and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple Deism. It must have been the first, and will probably be the last, that man believes. But pure and simple Deism does not answer the purpose of despotic governments. They cannot lay hold of religion as an engine, but by mixing it with human inventions, and making their own authority a part; neither does it answer the avarice of priests, but by incorporating themselves and their functions with it, and becoming, like the government, a party in the system. It is this that forms the otherwise mysterious connection of church and state; the church humane, and the state tyrannic.

"Were a man impressed as fully and as strongly as he ought to be, with a belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief; he would stand in awe of God, and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be concealed from either. To give this belief the full opportunity of force, it is necessary that it acts alone. This is Deism."

Page 89. "We can know God only through his works. We cannot have a conception of any one attribute, but by following some principle that leads to it. We have only a confused idea of his power, if we have not the means of comprehending something of its immensity. We can have no idea of his wisdom, but by knowing the order and manner in which it acts. The principles of science lead to this knowledge; for the creator of man is the creator of science, and it is through that medium that man can see God, as it were, face to face.

“ Could a man be placed in a situation, and endowed with power of vision, to behold at one view, and to contemplate deliberately, the structure of the universe; to mark the movements of the several planets, the cause of their varying appearances, the unerring order in which they revolve, even to the remotest comet; their connections and dependance on each other, and to know the system of laws established by the Creator, that governs and regulates the whole; he would then conceive, far beyond what any church theology can teach him, the power, the wisdom, the vastness, the munificence of the Creator; he would then see, that all the knowledge man has of science, and that all the mechanical arts by which he renders his situation comfortable here, are derived from that source; his mind, exalted by the scene, and convinced by the fact, would increase in gratitude as it increased in knowledge; his religion or his worship would become united with his improvement as a man; any employment he followed, that had connection with the principles of the Creation, as every thing of agriculture, of science, and of the mechanical arts, has, would teach him more of God, and of the gratitude he owes to him, than any theological Christian sermon he now hears. Great objects inspire great thoughts; great munificence excites great gratitude; but the grovelling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt.”

I think, Gentlemen, there is nothing in these passages but what any intelligent man may feel pleasure in supporting; and the same spirit runs through the whole work. They are the sentiments of a candid and benevolent mind; they do honour to the high feelings, and to the heart from which they flowed. I do not agree with all that Paine says, because I do not think he was wholly free from superstition; but, as a bold enquirer after truth—as a bold determined foe to all that is cruel, I applaud him. His worth and character have been summed up in a few sentences by one of his contemporaries: “ The writings of Paine bear the most striking relations to the immediate improvement and moral felicity of the intelligent world. He writes upon principle, and he always understands the principle upon which he writes; he reasons without logic, and convinces without argumentation; he strangles error by his first grasp, and develops truth with much simplicity, but with irresistible force. He is one of the first and best of writers, and probably the most useful man that ever existed upon the face of the earth. His moral and political writings are equally excellent; and the beneficial influence of the principles for which he has contended, will be felt through all succeeding ages.”

It is a remarkable coincidence that Thomas Paine died in America this very day fifteen years, since which time the value of his works has increased in the same ratio as they have been sought to be suppressed. His persecutors have stimulated an enquiry, and the result has been conviction to the enquirer, that Paine has

sought nothing but the public utility. He has written upon principle, which is not confined to any age or country, and which can only be forgotten with time itself. You have roused an examination of his works and of the principles of government, which can only end in the annihilation of all despotism.

In defending the sale of this work, it is not necessary to state what my *own* principles are; I have merely to show that the work contains no principles injurious to society, and that I have committed no crime in selling it. For my own part, I never quarrel with any man on his religious profession, but leave him to judge for himself. Opinions are seldom received voluntary; they are the result of the early impressions of education, of the manners of the country in which we are brought up. There is no *crime* in a Turk embracing the faith of Mahomet, nor in an Indian worshipping Juggernaut, nor in a Christian, Jesus Christ; they are all alike impressions of education. There is as much truth in one system as the other, because they are all alike destitute. They are all alike human inventions, which instead of being a benefit to the human species, have been most destructive to their interests and happiness. There may be good men who live in peace and tranquillity under these systems, though I believe, if it were not for these establishments the number of good men would be far greater. As men, I have no enmity against them, but am ready to hold out the hand of fellowship towards them; and all that I claim is, the same indulgence in return towards me. I have an equal right, as a citizen, for protection for my principles as they have for theirs, and that government must be unjust and arbitrary which can support the one and spurn the other. Gentlemen, if you this day lend your voices for my punishment, you know not how soon some other men may be called upon to pronounce yours. During the quarrels of the early Christians, it was no uncommon occurrence for a Bishop to be called from exile and replaced by the very men who before sat in judgment upon him. Athenasius was several times banished and restored, though at the expence of blood; the orthodox were deposited and substituted in their room, though the murder of thousands was the consequence. You will perhaps lend yourselves this day to doom a fellow creature to a gaol, when you know not, *when once sanctioned*, what prosecutions may be preparing for yourselves. Do you suppose you will make me a better member of society by confining me amongst some of the worst of characters? Do you suppose I can improve in a prison? No, I must return to society a much worse member than I am at present.

It has been over and over again asked, "what is blasphemy?" Now all philosophers allow that argument is vain when its principle terms are not defined. As long, therefore, as I am ignorant of the true and accurate definition of blasphemy, and as long as I am incapable of discovering the hair-breadth line that sepa-

rates religion from superstition, faith from credulity, so long must I be sailing without a compass, and wandering over desert wilds unguided by a polar star. If it be blasphemy to deny the divinity of Christ, why do you suffer the Unitarians to worship their one and undivided God, in the peace of undisturbed toleration? If again, according to modern philosophy, Christ be the Sun, you cannot accuse me of denying the divinity of that beneficent, that ever glorious, that eternal Being.

Again, therefore, permit me to ask: what is blasphemy? Is it blasphemy to suggest, that Tobias's dog was perhaps a poodle, when others assert that it was grey-hound? Is it blasphemy to insinuate, that a serpent's talking to a woman must be understood allegorically, and not literally? Is it blasphemy to assert that the great unknown cause of all things, could never have commanded one of his trusty servants, to feed upon bread buttered with human foces? Alas! Gentlemen, I know not what blasphemy is; and fluctuating between the contradictory decisions of equally learned Theologians, I find it my best, and indeed my only resource, to suspend my judgment upon whatever appears to contradict my reason.

The faith indeed, not only of Theists, but also of that sect of Theists called Christians, ought undoubtedly to be founded on reason, and on reason alone. The great Tertullianus, one of the principal fathers of your church, says, in his discourse against the Marcionites: "If thou wishest me to believe what thou assertest; prove that things *are as* thou assertest; but, if thou canst not prove them, how can I believe thee." Modern theologians, who have not like their predecessors the advantage of disordering the general laws of nature, that they may extend the belief in that creating Deity, who is best made known by the immutability of those laws, are obliged to insist, not upon the efficacy, but upon the reasonableness of their doctrines. If, with Tertullianus, I could prove that it was *Saturninus* who was governor of Syria and not *Cyrenius*, at the time mentioned by St. Luke, it is clear that one of the chronological proofs of your religion is very materially injured; and if I asserted that five barley loaves and two small fishes were physically incapable of feeding 5000 human beings and afterwards filling twelve baskets; I might perhaps tend to shake the belief of the elect. But my object is not to excite doubts in your minds, with regard to that system of faith, which Tacitus so unpolitely denominates "a pernicious superstition:" but my object is, to convince you, as far as my humble means are capable, "that the persecution which falls short of annihilation, has ever been fatal to the prosecutors also." If indeed, as in Japan, you utterly and simultaneously destroy every believer in a faith, of which the Government disapprove, you may applaud yourselves with having impeded for a considerable time the progress of free discussion. If, like Philip the third, you compel 900,000 men to quit your

country at a month's warning, you may enjoy the inestimable blessing of seeing your provinces depopulated. If again you were to imitate the wretched policy of that vain and superstitious tyrant Louis the 14th, you might rob the land of its most useful citizens, and see them carrying their arts and manufactories to less bigoted nations, or, animated by a justifiable spirit of revenge, join the ranks of those who thirsted to destroy your despotism. But whatever may be the success of *wholesale* persecutions, they have never as yet succeeded in *retail*. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of every church; and the smoking ashes of Ridley and Latimer must have gained more converts to the modern heresy of Protestantism, than all the preaching of Bonner and Gardiner, could retain believers to the mouldering fabric of the ancient and orthodox superstition. The Church (on the convocation) of Theists, have as much right to the protection of the Government, as the church of that religion, which might be called in honour of its founder "Cranmerianism." If England contains eight millions of inhabitants, we may perhaps assert that only four millions of these are "Cranmerians," or Protestants. The rest constitute a variety of sects, more or less approaching to the religion of nature, and agreeing only in the rational desire of depriving the orthodox parsons of their tythes and fees. Are the Theists, or as we might more properly be called, the "Moralists," (for we profess no other religion than Morality), are we to be excluded from that right of publishing our thoughts, which is enjoyed by the Dunkers, the Ranters, the Jumpers, and the Johanna Southcotians? Did a female Deist ever cut off the head of her infant brother, in order to send him spotless to heaven? Who are the men that are convicted of larcenies, of burglaries, of rapes, of unnatural crimes? Are they the Thists? No, they are the Christians. We may indeed affirm, that except when mistaken ideas of politics, have driven men to the desire of liberating their country from fancied tyrants, every criminal, that for centuries has in this island been condemned to death, has been a Christian. I do not mean that *all* Theists are good men, nor that *all* Christians are bad men; but these facts argue strongly against you.

You allow the morality of the Quakers, and you cannot deny *our* morality. Examine any list of anti-superstitionists; and unless you object to the ordinary jealousy of men of talents, and an excessive love for the female part of the community, you can hardly discover a single flaw in the characters of any one of these much abused philosophers. How is it then that we are prosecuted? Because we are poor and few in number: we are poor—for we abhor the plunderers of the nation: we are few in number—for the sick, the childish, the effeminate, and the silly, (that is, nine tenths of mankind) are unable or unwilling to obey mere common sense. The Quakers were *once* exposed to imprisonment, as we are; but *now* they have triumphed over their enemy, and they

are respected and esteemed. Yet surely if there be heretics, they are the Quakers; and Tertullianus affirms, (in his book "*De Prescriptionibus Hæreticorum*") that "heretics cannot be Christians." Why then do you not prosecute the Quakers? because you dare not. And the time *must* come when we shall be equally powerful.

It is the usual argument with modern bigots, that Theists are at liberty to entertain what thoughts they choose, but not to publish those thoughts. In truth these Christians are very condescending in permitting us at least to *think* for ourselves. This however has long been granted us. In spite of the equalizing temper of the ancient theologians, who wished to subject the intellect of their fellow men to the bed of Procrates, it is now very universally granted, that opinions are as different as physiognomies, and that the utmost efforts of education cannot endure even brothers, with a perfect similarity of taste and judgment. But to think, without uttering our thoughts, is a very unprofitable labour; and if Newton and La Place had covered the fruits of their discoveries with an impenetrable veil, the laws of motion, and the wonderful powers of mathematics, would yet lie dormant. But if this religion is true, and mathematics are true, why should researches in mathematics be encouraged, and these in religion be prohibited? If the planets roll in their eternal courses, without the aid of the Christaline spheres of Ptolemy, why should not the laws of nature, manifested in the creation of animals, continue steadfast without the aid of a spiritual God?

But I am not willing, Gentlemen, to enter into theological discussions, for which science has not as yet afforded sufficient data, and which only serve to infect both parties with sentiments of the bitterest acrimony. Since the propagation of the Christian faith, we have ever been exposed to the terrible effects of the "odium theologicum;" and even before that time, the Jews and Egyptians were guilty of occasional intolerance. But ancient Greece seems to have allowed a degree of scepticism, which now a days would seem incredible; and the every sect of philosophers, except some of the disciples of Socrates, maintained, as a fundamental doctrine, that "nature is God," yet the demi-Christian son of Sophroniseus was, to the best of our knowledge, the only martyr, whose life the Athenians ever offered upon the shrine of their Gods. Times are strangely altered; the asserters of the divinity of nature scarcely dare express their sentiments; and the Christians, eager to appease the displeasure of their triple Deity, imprison those who venture to support the opinions of the ancient philosophers.

But to return from this digression. I repeat that we have as much right to *publish* our thoughts as we have to *entertain* them. Otherwise, what right had the Christians to overthrow the established worship of the 30,000 Gods of the Pagans? What right had St. Austin to preach against the religion of our king

Ethelbert? What right had Luther and Calvin to throw down the images of the Catholic idolatry? Finally, what right have your Cranmerians, your Methodists, and your Anabaptists, to send Missionaries into every quarter of the globe, exhorting the superstitious inhabitants, to abandon the absurdities of their ancestors, and to adopt a more reasonable faith? If it were not for the boldness of such men as Paine, you would now, Gentlemen, be offering sacrifices to Jupiter and Mars, or to Thor and Woden. Yet the adorers of nature are now pronounced to be Atheists, a name once given to the Christians. When indeed you adore a spiritual, invisible, immaterial, undescribable God, you may very fairly be suspected of adoring "nothing." But to the adorers of a Deity, whose existence cannot be denied, who is every where visible, and every where beneficent, in whom literally, "we live and move and have our being," surely it is not to such men as Paine that the term of Atheists ought to be applied? We will not indeed dispute about *names*; for *names* have hitherto caused more bloodshed and misery, than the most abominable actions. The adorer of Allah would not hate the adorers of Jehovah, if informed that Allah and Jehovah were the same being; and that however far Mahomet of Mecca and Paul of Tarsus, were actuated by motives of personal ambition, it is most charitable to suppose, that their principal object was the reformation, and, consequently, the happiness of man.

The calm eye of philosophy looks down with contempt or indifference, upon the intolerant madness of the vulgar; but it is with grief and indignation that she views men, who have received a good education, and who are entrusted with power, exciting the imbecile and the ignorant against those who wish to uphold the torch of truth. Think you, Gentlemen, that if I were sitting in a private room with any one of you, you would be so glaringly deficient in common honesty and politeness, as to imprison me, because you might not be able to refute my opinions? How then can you bear to do that collectively, which you would blush to do separately? Do you hope that your names will never be made known, and that you will be able to keep one another in countenance? I appeal to your conscience, I appeal to your sense of honour, to your innate principle of rectitude, and to that common sense which even all the prejudices instilled into us during our childhood, cannot utterly annihilate. Do as you would be done by; tolerate Theists, that they may one day tolerate you; and recollect, that many a Christian priest, who, during the French Revolution expiated his bigotry on the Guillotine, must have lamented, that he prosecuted philosophy, and that he kept the people in ignorance, till suddenly enlightened, they dashed into all the excesses of revenge.

If it were possible I should feel satisfied to rest my whole defence on the book itself; there is no passage selected for prosecution, but is fully supported by the author. I would not go be-

yond the book for a defence of it, were it read attentively by the Jury before they pronounced their verdict; for the book contains every defence that is necessary, every explanation of those passages selected for prosecution. It is highly requisite that it should be read by the Jury before an unprejudiced verdict can be given. Remember, these are sentences which are supposed to be the worst; and selected from all that renders them intelligible; a few sentences thrown out in the heat of argument; and at a time the author's feelings have been indignant at the impositions imposed upon his fellow creatures. What book has ever been written, that sentences could not be culled from, which some persons would term objectionable? None; for my own part, I have never read the book yet that I could agree to in every particular: there will always be something more than we can admire or subscribe to. But are authors to be blamed for this? by no means; no two persons can be found precisely united in taste and sentiment, it is therefore impossible for the most ingenious author to please every one. I read a book and resolve to glean from it all that I consider valuable, but if I find a portion of it useless, I throw it aside, not fly to an attorney to prosecute it; I do not call upon you to admire the same books that I do, nor ever read them unless you please. If a book be useless, the public neglect would soon throw it aside, the bookseller would abandon it as stale and unprofitable; but whatever may be the contents of these books, for which I am prosecuted, you *force* them upon the public notice; create a demand for them, and then punish the bookseller for supplying it! If it be said "such books are against my religion," I tell you, you pay an ill compliment to your religion, to suppose them capable of injuring it. The Christian religion is said to be an emanation from an infinite being; then how is it possible, a book, the production of a finite being can tend to subvert it? But the actions of these meddling Christians deny the very power they lay claim to, by rushing forth to the protection of that which is divine. If you say Thomas Paine has the power to injure or destroy the Christian religion, you give him a greater power than the founder of your religion; you tacitly acknowledge that your divine system cannot withstand the attacks of an individual! What a contradiction! What a complicated system is that of religion! You cannot defend it, you cannot reason upon it, you say it is one thing, and prove it to be another.

The Jews show me a book or books, which they say is a revelation from God. I read them, and find they contain little else than the history of exterminating wars, and some of them of the most horrid and unwarrantable description. I read from them the most disgusting tales, which if they were written and sold at the present day, the author and publisher would justly meet the odium and execration of mankind. I read of "Gods chosen people," "*borrowing*" from their neighbours all that was valuable,

with the sole intention of keeping them, which if practised at the present day would transport the offenders from their country. I read of an intercourse between a father and daughters, which if practised at the present day, would, most probably bring the culprit to the gallows. In short, if we expect to live in society, we must not *practise* from those books, but *avoid* them. I turn to the Christians, they show me a second revelation. I read there that God sent a part of himself to be sacrificed to appease the other part.

Sir C. Hunter, the Alderman upon the Bench, went up to the Recorder's seat, and called loudly to the defendant to stop his defence. Sir Claudius then whispered some words in the ear of the Judge.

The Recorder said, in reply, as we indistinctly caught, "I think he had better not be interrupted."—At this instant one of the Jurors said, "Are we to sit, and hear all this, my Lord? I am quite sick of hearing it."—The Recorder said he was loth to interrupt the defendant, because he knew what was generally said elsewhere, upon such occasions, by those who were enemies to every thing in the shape of law, order, and religion. The defendant had, in all probability, been imposed upon by others who had instructed him, that this mode of defence would avail himself with a Jury; but he was much mistaken. He sincerely hoped, that the defence of the prisoner was not his own composition; and he was grievously in the wrong, if he had calculated that the court would permit an attack upon every thing holy and sacred. So long, however, as he pursued a proper line of argument, and a legitimate course of defence, he would not be interrupted.

Defendant—I have no other way of defending myself, than by proving the truth of the works for which I am prosecuted.

Sir C. Hunter said: "Defendant, so long as you kept a fair line of defence, it was all well: but now you come to discuss the doctrines of the Old Testament, and then go down to the New one, you really must not be heard. I will not sit to listen to you."

The defendant said, he should endeavour to avoid a course that appeared obnoxious, though such a line of defence appeared to be essential to his case.

Gentlemen, the part of my defence to which I now come, is, of itself, decisive of the whole question that you have to try, and to it I beg your particular attention. In my own expressions to you, I have carefully avoided offering a sentence that could irritate or offend, even if you are at the antipodes of my judgment of right and wrong. I desire not so much to defend any particular opinions, as to explain to you what they are, and to shew you at least my sense, that, in publishing the books before the Court, I have not committed an offence against the laws. Mere opinions

are generally erroneous: the question proper for human consideration, is, not this or that man's opinion, but what is the best judgment we can establish upon the properties of all such things as present themselves to our senses. If we reflect properly on this ground, we shall seldom err; and I invite you, Gentlemen, to suspend for a moment any preconceived opinions on the matter under discussion, and receive fairly such arguments as I shall offer in conclusion, to prove that I have not offended any law.

First, I will explain to you, that it is possible for ignorant men to set up something which they call law, and which must be absolutely null and void from its having nothing to rest upon, but the phantasms of their brains, which are mere ideas without real existencies for application. For instance, in this, and in almost every other country, there have been laws and customs about that phantasm of human imagination called Witchcraft. It is a fact, that the existing parliament of this country has put the finishing stroke to the repeal of such laws as relating to Ireland. The pressing of this law of repeal upon the attention of the House of Commons, was among the last acts of the late Lord Castlereagh, and the circumstance may be viewed, either as a condemnation of, or a partial requital for, his other outrages upon the human mind. In almost every neighbourhood, it has been the misfortune of some poor old woman, the least handsome and most eccentric, to be denominated the witch of that neighbourhood: and to her have been delegated all the powers attributed to that other phantasm of human imagination, the Devil. To destroy all domestic animals, to blast all vegetation, and to disease and torment the human body, are among the attributes of witchcraft. I say, *are*; for they are not yet extinct in the more retired and ignorant parts of this country. There were tried at the last Dorset Sessions, and now filling out a years imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol, a man and his wife, otherwise respectable, for mutilating their neighbour, a woman, as a witch, who had destroyed, as they fancied, their cattle and swine, and this mutilation was made under the old pretence, that drawing blood from her would deprive her of all further power to injure those persons. Now, Gentlemen, if you will reflect, you must perceive that it is a wholly vicious and really dreadful process at law. that seeks to punish men who desire nothing more than to rid the world of such ignorance as has led this otherwise virtuous man and woman to crime and penal degradation. I will make it appear plain to you, that such and such only is the character of my publication.

As the ideas associated with the word witchcraft attribute superhuman power to some human being, as laws have been instituted upon that association of ideas, and as every man of ordinary education now fully understands, that no such superhuman powers, as are attributed to witchcraft, ever did or can exist, it follows,

that such laws were absolutely null and void, that what was called crime of Witchcraft, never did exist, but in the words of the statute book, that the law created the supposed crime and was not made to repress a real crime, and that all punishments inflicted upon individuals by process of such bad law were so many wrongs done, so many violations of good law; because injury was done under the name of law, where no offence against law existed, and in this, as in almost all cases of the kind, the most innocent, the most quiet, the most moral, the most useful individuals, were generally the victims of ignorance, malice, or designing villainy. Consider, reflect, Gentlemen, whether such a law as a law against witchcraft could ever exist even when it had a name. To have existed, witchcraft must have existed: if you can see, as I hope, that such a crime as Witchcraft cannot exist then you must inferentially see that certain words have existed and have been called a law which were not in reality a law, because they had no just and legal application. It shall now be my task, my complete exculpation of all offence against law, to make the same arguments apply to the supposed crime of blasphemy.

Blasphemy, Gentlemen, like the word Witchcraft, in its common acceptation, has no more of actual existence, and no more connection with real law than any other mere phantom of the imagination. As was the case with the word *Witchcraft*, we have statutes which speak of the word *blasphemy*, and pronounce it an offence against law: but, to be in reality a law, the word *blasphemy* should be definable and applicable to some person or thing. You have neither person nor thing before you as the object of any blasphemy, and the word of itself is altogether idle and without meaning: all the statutes which allude to it are null and void. If I am charged with blaspheming God, I can shew the absolute impossibility of the act, as easy as I can shew the absolute impossibility of the act of Witchcraft. If I am charged with blaspheming religion, I call for a statutable definition of the religion in the first instance, and of what is blasphemy towards it, in the second.

IN ALL MATTERS THAT CONCERN US AS HUMAN BEINGS, TWO THINGS ARE REQUIRED; IF THEY RELATE TO THE PRESENT, THAT THEY BE PHYSICALLY TRUE; IF THEY RELATE TO THE PAST, THAT THEY BE HISTORICALLY TRUE, AND IT MAY BE RECEIVED AS THE MOST SOLID OF TRUTHS, THAT WHAT IS NOT PHYSICALLY TRUE, FOR THE PRESENT, HAS NO HISTORICAL TRUTH AS TO THE PAST. Proceeding upon this unerring criterion, the history of the matters related in the Bible has been examined; by history, they can be proved to be fabulous inventions; and whatever now seems difficult to be believed, in its relation to physics, is satisfactorily cleared up as fabulous, by its defect in history.

The two great heads of the Bible are, that a nation, under the joint name of Israelites and Jews, inhabited the country, now

called Palestine, on the coast of Syria, in Asia Minor, and that, out of this nation of Jews sprang a being, half man, half God, who was to be the harbinger of eternal happiness to those who should hear and believe of him. Now, if I prove indubitably, by authentic history, that the Jews did not inhabit the *land* now called *holy*, or *Palestine*, before they were there colonized by one of the Babylonian Princes, after what is called the Babylonian Captivity; and if I prove as indubitably, that no such person as Jesus Christ was ever known at Jerusalem, I remove every idea of an offence against law in the publication I have made; and such proofs I now proceed to advance.

Sir C. Hunter again rose, and stopped the defendant, and after a short conference with the Recorder, the defendant was told to proceed.

So long as the Bible existed but in foreign languages, or so long as no other book was read by the mass of the people, historical error, as connected with it, was not likely to be detected: nor was it likely to be sought after, until science had proclaimed the physical impossibility of many things there related. But science, or to be more distinct, the sciences of astronomy, geology, chemistry, and physics generally, have proclaimed, that many things related in this book are physically impossible; and this proclamation, with the persecutions that have followed the publishers of it, have stimulated a full examination into the history of the book, and the persons of whom it treats.

To disprove either of the points mentioned, as the two great heads of the Bible, is disproving the allegations of my indictment, that I have maliciously published the matter it sets forth; because, a disproof of the first shakes the second, and a disproof of the second leaves the first no matter of English law; but I feel the power, the strong hold, of being able to disprove both.

It would be a strange thing, Gentlemen, if the inhabitants of Liverpool, or Lancashire generally, or the inhabitants of Ireland, were ignorant that such a province as Wales, and such a people as the Welsh lived near them. Every principle of human intercourse scouts the supposition. And such is the case with the Phenecians and Grecians in regard to Judea and the Jews. Had a nation of Israelites or Jews lived on what is now called Palestine, before they were there colonized by a Babylonian prince, it is not possible, but some allusions to them would have been made by the Poets and Historians of Greece and Phenecia. But in the writings of these Poets and Historians, there is not the slightest allusion to such a place as Jerusalem, or to such a people as Israelites or Jews, and the geographical position of Phenecia and Greece, or the Grecian Islands in particular, to Jerusalem and Judea generally, is as near as can be similar to that of Lancashire, the Isle of Man, and Ireland, to the principality of Wales.

This, Gentlemen, is an important point in my defence; for, if I

explain to you, that my knowledge and judgment of this part of history is correct, I remove the whole foundation of my indictment, and convince you, that I could not have the slightest malicious motive in issuing the publication before the Court. Guilty of publishing a book or books, believing them to be both true and useful, I readily plead; and ask such a verdict at your hands; but *Not Guilty of any malicious motive—Not Guilty of any offence against law in such a publication.*

This, then, Gentlemen, is an historical fact, that no such a people as the Jews existed as a nation in Asia Minor, before they were so colonized by the Babylonian Prince; and this fact subverts the whole history of the Bible, save that one fact of the Babylonian Colonization. Subsequent to that colonization, we have a clear and authentic history of the Jews, corroborated in the history of every country in the neighbourhood of Judea. Subsequent to that period, we find them mentioned in the History of Egypt, in the History of Greece, and, in the History of Rome; but prior to that period, we have not the slightest mention of them by any people, though the Phenicians and Grecians were as old a standing people as any of whom we have records. There is further corroboration of this statement in the fact, that the Bible contains internal evidence, scattered from the book of Genesis to the book of Malachi, that it was compiled subsequent to that colonization; and that it had not an existence, as a book, previous to the Babylonian Captivity.

It is a question, that if the Jews did not inhabit the coasts of Syria, before the Babylonian Captivity, whence came they at Babylon, what country did they inhabit? There seems to be no difficulty in solving this question. It is impossible, that such a king as Solomon could have reigned so splendidly in so barren and mountainous a country as that now called Judea. Of all places on the face of the earth, it was the most unfit for a powerful and splendid monarchy; therefore, from a variety of names of places mentioned in the Bible having no trace in the present Judea, and the description of a country, the very reverse of that which now passes under that name, it is a fair inference, that the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah were situated on the eastern side of the Assyrian Empire. The Bible mentions obscurely an Assyrian Captivity, and travellers have found the remnant of such a nation mixed up with the people of Hindostan. The tradition of the ten tribes having been led away as captives by the Assyrians, further corroborates this conclusion; which is still further warranted, by the whole tenour of the Bible resembling the writings of Eastern more than of Western Asia. The inhabitants of Asia Minor have been immemorially a plodding and trading people, such as the Jews have been since the Babylonian Colonization, whilst the inhabitants of Eastern Asia have ever been represented

to us as a splendid and sublime people, such as the Israelites are represented in many parts of the Bible.

My inference, then, is, that the evident fables, as to the historical part of the Bible, proclaim all the supernatural relations to be fabulous: and this undermines at once the whole of the Jewish, and the whole of the Christian religion, undermines my indictment, and proclaims my innocence of all offence against law.

On the other head, or whether there be any historical truth in the books called the Four Gospels, I proceed to explain.

Gentlemen, I do not stand here disposed to impugn any character, or to investigate the moral merits of any system of religion, I feel, that I stand upon a higher and more important ground. I desire to state nothing but what is strictly true, at least, fairly stated, as the two sides of a question. I crave no more, than that my conduct be tried upon the principles of morality, public utility, and valid law. Therefore, I entreat, that you will follow my observations and connect my arguments upon the same principles: and that you will not allow preconceived opinions to deter you from listening, or to operate prejudicially towards me, in your investigation of my defence. It is an important maxim—that we should never be alarmed at words; but that we should carefully examine if they leave the same impressions on our minds, as was intended by the utterer. Different men attaching different ideas to the same words, constitutes one half of the differences which exist among them. If a full and substantial knowledge of things could be unerringly communicated from one to another, all must agree; but as this is not yet the case, we should tolerate, examine, and instruct each other.

The words *Jesus Christ* are not words which designate the name of a person. They are words of title only; and, in English, express the words *Saviour Anointed*. To suppose that they were a personal name is and has been a great mistake: they originated as an allegory, and have been corrupted into a fancied reality. To prove this, I will trace their history.

These words are the foundation of that system of religion which is called Christianity. This system we count as an existence of eighteen hundred and twenty four years standing. We have historical records which take it back seventeen hundred years; but within the first century, there is not a record, nor the fragment of a record, there is not the most vague allusion, to give us a footing in tracing its origin. Its birth is dated in Judea; but the circumstances of that country, and the clear history, which the historian Josephus has given us of that period, totally exclude its origin from that neighbourhood, at least from the whole territory of Judea. Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed about the year which we now call seventy; and it is admitted by all Christian writers, that there was no such a sect as a sect of Christians in

Jerusalem at that time. Jerusalem was also the last town in Judea that was sacked and destroyed within the previous seventy years, and nothing like what is represented in the book called the New Testament could have passed in such a time of war and desolation: and though we have a minute history from Josephus, of all that did pass, in the major part of which he was either actor or spectator, he was evidently ignorant of such a sect as Christians; for he has not an allusion to such a sect. The inference is therefore good, that before Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jews residing in Judea extirpated, the words Jesus Christ, or the sect called Christians, or the system called Christianity, were not heard of in that neighbourhood.

There is not a record extant, written within the first century, that mentions a sect called Christians; but of records written in the second century, we have an abundance. The book called the Acts of the Apostles, which was written after the middle of the second century, as proved, by reference, at the commencement, of its being addressed to Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, about the middle of that century, says, "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." The writer of this was Luke, a Physician of Antioch. Antioch was a Grecian city, and *Christ* is a derivation of *Christos*, a Greek word. The first persecution of Christians recorded was at Antioch, at the commencement of the sect, during the reign of Trajan. At the close of that reign, the sect had not spread beyond the neighbourhood of Antioch. Pliny the younger, being appointed Proconsul of Bithynia, at the commencement of the second century, or about the year 110, travelled from Rome to that, one of the most distant Roman provinces, and found nothing of a sect of Christians until he came there: as is proved in his letter to Trajan, enquiring how he should deal with them, in consequence of the novelty of the thing. These are powerful, abundant, and convincing proofs, that the words *Jesus Christ* do not designate the name of a person; but that they are allegorical, and the symbol of a new system; the inventors of which must have seen the propriety of laying their scenes in Judea, a neighbouring country just laid desolate, and from which none could rise to contradict them.

No writer on Ecclesiastical History can trace Christianity a step either as to time or place, beyond where I have here gone. It would be a great satisfaction to me to be able to do it. I have spared no pains to get farther; but find myself absolutely fixed here, and here I am compelled to conclude, that Christianity originated not in Judea, as the inventors of the system have stated.

Dr. Lardner, the most eminent and most laborious man who has attempted the task, has sought in vain for traces beyond those I now state. Eusebius, the first Ecclesiastical Historian after the Christians were seated in power, has not an atom of proof of the

existence of Christianity before this period, and laments the want of facts to corroborate the contents of the New Testament. What then, Gentlemen, am I charged with blaspheming? Two words? Nothing more! I challenge the world to shew that the words ever applied to a person: and, if this cannot be shewn, I have not published blasphemy of a person: I cannot have offended the law of England, which takes cognizance of nothing but injuries done to persons or property. I cannot have offended public morals; for there can be no immorality but in injury done to persons or property. All that I have done is to publish a useful book—useful, because it is a fair exposure of a book that is not useful—cried up as good, whilst it is a public nuisance.

In arguing the matter as a point of law, or the legal practice in these cases, I have every thing in my favour. I rest, first, upon the circumstance, that I have done no injury, either to person or property; without the one or the other of which, there can be no offence against law: and, second, that the old common law of the country, never did take cognizance of such cases as that now before you. Coke was the first to define the spirit of the common law, and of the law court practice of this country; and, relating to such cases as mine, he has laid down the following clear decision.

The following are the words in the reports of Lord Coke, fifth volume, in the celebrated case of Caubrey, page 9.

“So in causes ecclesiastical and spiritual, as, namely, blasphemy, apostacy from Christianity, heresies, schisms, and others, (the common source whereof belongs not to the common laws of England), the same are to be determined and decided by the ecclesiastical judges, according to the king’s ecclesiastical laws of the realm.” And a little lower down, page 10, he says—“For that as before, it appeareth the deciding of matters so many, and of so great importance, are not within the conusance of the common laws.”

Here we find that such matters are not within the cognizance of the common law courts, and the whole history of such prosecutions as this, for which I now stand here, proves, that the cognizance now taken is an usurpation of power, unsanctioned by the legislature of the country. The ecclesiastical court is the proper court, according to the law and right practice; and this court has not lost an atom of its power, beyond that of which it has been deprived by public opinion. Nothing has been legislatively taken from it. Justice from the Judge of this court, I do not ask, in this matter; because, my experience, in noticing the similar cases of others, has taught me that it would be vain to expect it; but, justice from you, the Jury, I have a right to expect; because you are supposed to be strangers to all former proceedings of this kind: you cannot be implicated in any of them.

Now, then, I repeat to you, Gentlemen, that I have proved, not only that I am tried by no law, not only that I have committed no offence, as property or person I have injured not, and blasphemy as here charged I have proved cannot maliciously exist or be an act; but, even admitting that there was a law, and that mine was an offence against it, I have shewn you, that it is not cognizable in this court. The Ecclesiastical Court dares not to take cognizance of such a case in the present state of public knowledge and public disposition; and, consequently, I am absolved from all legal jurisdiction, for having published the book before you. I have shewn you, that the book itself is defensible at every point; therefore, I must not be understood as boasting of a triumph because there is no power to take cognizance of a wrong doing: whatever I have done, in this and similar cases, I have done under the conviction that it was perfectly moral, perfectly legal, and highly useful to the public as a whole.

I will conclude, Gentlemen, with repeating those sentiments with which I opened my defence. If it be said that I had warning of the practicability and end of such prosecutions, I answer, that that warning was to me nothing more than a sense of duty to take my stand against them. I have seen such prosecutions instituted in defiance of the most convincing arguments against them, and I conclude, that it is not a respect for the law, that it is not this or that opinion, or religion, sought to be protected; but that the end and aim of these prosecutions is, to protect certain abuses profitable only to the prosecutors. Against this abuse of power *alone* do I array myself; and all I ask is, the liberty to shew fully and freely, through the medium of the printing press, that it is an abuse of power, that it does not exist for the benefit of the people as a whole.

If one prosecution of this kind were a moral justification of their continuance, the same might be said of every abuse that has been practised. All great changes among mankind, all great benefits, have been obtained by successfully resisting established error supported by governmental power. With power, profit is always allied, and whatever abuses be connected with power and profit, the holders for the time being will never quietly and morally yield; but will defend them even tyrannically and cruelly. This is, and has been, the common disposition of mankind. It is not confined to my prosecutors; it is not confined to this country; but wherever it has existed, it has been and must ever be conquered by such conduct as I have thus exhibited to you Gentlemen of the Jury: and with this conviction, an adverse verdict from you will be to me a matter of perfect indifference: I shall bear my sufferings like those who have gone before me, with the fortitude of innocence and the calmness of integrity: but should I hear from you that which I feel that I deserve—a verdict of *Not Guilty of a malicious intention in publishing this book*, I shall hail the moment

that puts a stop to further persecution and further suffering on this ground, and look back to that retirement from which such prosecutions have unwisely drawn me to bid them defiance. I have now done my duty in this case, Gentlemen, I leave you to do yours with equal resolution and sincerity.

The Recorder then summed up the case to the Jury, and after stating the offence the prisoner stood charged with, said there could be no doubt of his crime being punishable at common law, and cited a number of cases from James I. down to the present reign, tried before Judges Hale, Rolle, Mansfield, Kenyon, Ellenborough, &c. He particularly adverted to the case of a prisoner tried before Judge Hale, for publishing a work, in which he said, "Christ was a bastard, and religion was a cheat," and on being convicted, was sentenced to be fined 1,000 marks, thrice to stand in the pillory, and to find sureties for life. He also alluded to the case of Peter Annet, for publishing a work called the "Free Inquirer," who was tried before Lord Mansfield. This work libelled the Bible and the Christian religion, declaring that the books of Moses were forgeries, and the Christian religion an invention and fraud. He was convicted, and sentenced to one month's imprisonment in Newgate, to stand in the pillory at three different places, to be afterwards imprisoned in Newgate for twelve months, and to enter into security for his good behaviour for the term of his natural life. In this case the defendant was seventy years of age, he admitted his guilt, and put in affidavits of mitigation; but the court, although the defendant expressed his sorrow for his offence, (a mode of conduct very different to that displayed by the defendant at the bar) thought proper to inflict a sentence apparently severe, that being the only mode, in the opinion of the Judges, likely to suppress the sale of such diabolical publications. The present defendant was, therefore, mistaken in saying, that he had not offended the law, and that in publishing a libel of that malignant character which had been read to the Jury, he had done no wrong, and ought not to be punished. The Court were determined, as far as in its power lay, to suppress the sale of these publications, which diffused irreligious and diabolical opinions throughout the kingdom—publications not containing fair and candid arguments, but horrid expressions and false assertions, which he would not repeat, but would call the attention of the Jury to one sentence, viz. "that those who believed in the fabulous story of Christ were infidels to God."

After some further observations, the Recorder said that the law gave him the power to deliver his opinion upon the nature of the publication, and he did not hesitate to say, that it was a scandalous, impious, and blasphemous libel.

The Jury retired for about an hour, and then returned a verdict—"Guilty of publishing the libel in question."

Recorder—Let the prisoner be brought up instantly for judgment.

Clerk of the Arraignment—What have you to say, William Champion, why judgment should not be pronounced upon you, as in case of misdemeanour?

Defendant—The learned Judge, in replying to my defence, has not controverted one single argument I have used.

Recorder—The Jury have pronounced the work to be a blasphemous libel, by finding you guilty. Have you any thing to say?

Defendant—Nothing that I can say can benefit me.

Recorder—You may take an objection to the indictment probably?

Defendant—I shall take no legal objections.

The Recorder proceeded to pass the sentence of the Court.—Prisoner, you have been convicted of an atrocious offence—the publishing of a most wicked libel, blaspheming the Holy Bible and the Christian religion, and you have had the hardihood to take upon yourself the defence of the publication. You knew it was contrary to law to sell a work of that description, for you could not be ignorant that the same work had already been prosecuted, and adjudged in the Court of King's Bench to be an abominable libel. In spite of this warning you repeat the offence—you glory in your crime, and assert that your object was to do good to your fellow-countrymen. If you are so blindly infatuated, and bent upon violating the law of this land by propagating works denying the truth of the established religion, you must take the consequences of such obstinacy. It is the duty of the Court to pass such a sentence as will be the means of putting an end to the unlawful traffic you have been for some months concerned in. The rising generation are interested in the suppression of such abominable publications, which tend to destroy the seeds of religion, which had been implanted in their juvenile minds, and induce them to believe that there is no such thing as revealed religion. For the purpose of preventing you from continuing a practice which is a violation of the law, tending to subvert the established religion, and to debase and corrupt the morals of society, the Court sentences you, William Champion, to three years' imprisonment in his Majesty's Gaol of Newgate, and at the termination of that period to enter into your own recognizances in the sum of £100. to keep the peace for the term of your natural life.

The prisoner seemed surprised, as did also the majority of the spectators, at the extent of punishment to which he had been sentenced. There were three other indictments against him, which were withdrawn.

Subscriptions received at 84, Fleet Street, for the brave men who volunteered to fight the battle of truth against power, virtue against vice, reason against fanaticism.

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Mrs. Wright acknowledges the receipt of £1. 10s. from a few friends at Bethnal Green.